Digital asset management comparison guide

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What's Inside

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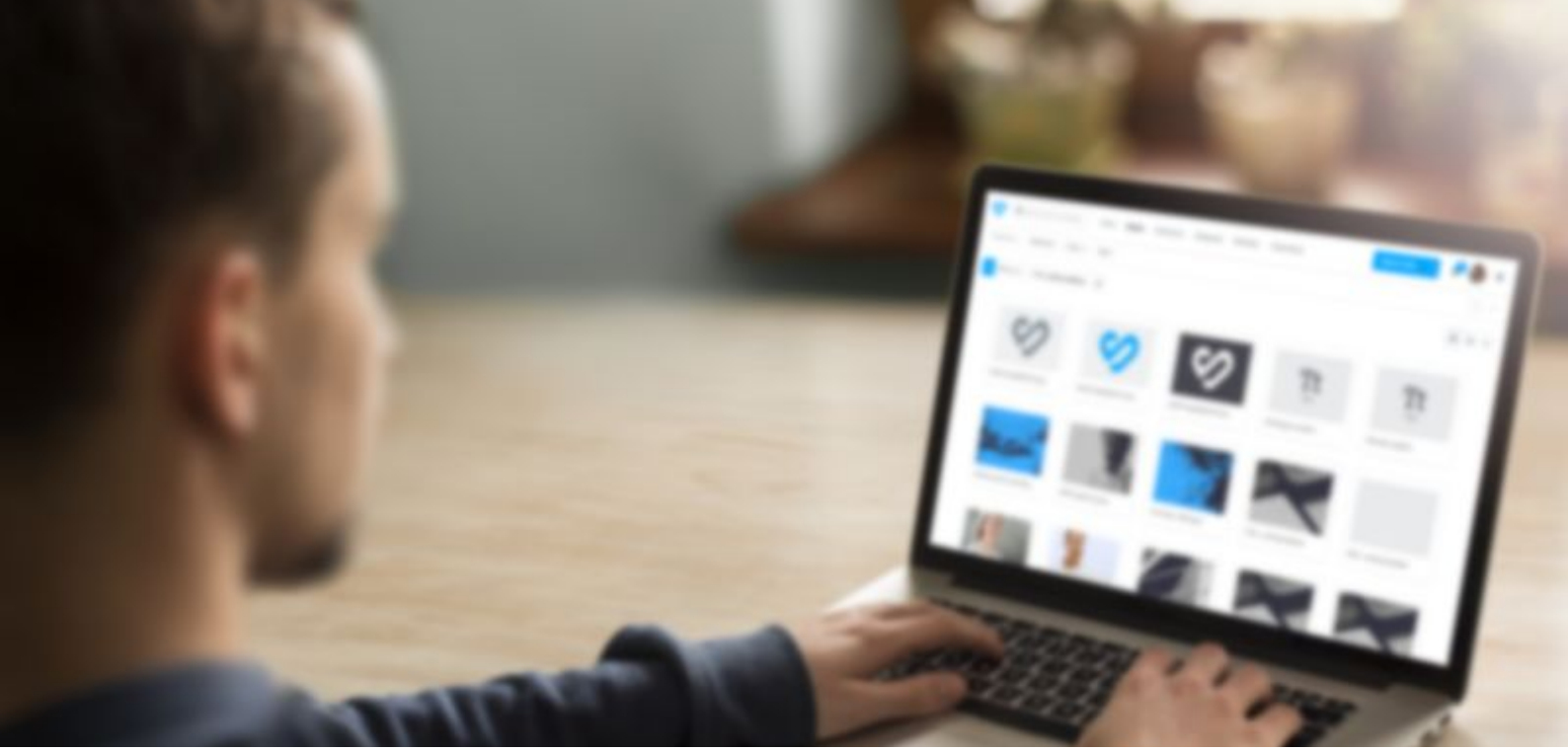


Comparing DAM solutions and features

If you are on the hunt for a Digital Asset Management (DAM) solution, you have probably already done your research regarding vendor selection. Moreover, you are probably at the stage where you have realized that all vendors offer different features geared towards meeting different requirements. This comparison guide aims to help you compare DAM software by giving you an idea of the different features DAM solutions can offer.

It is also important to acknowledge that most companies initially are unsure of what their DAM needs actually are, and what features they will end up needing. In order to best assess your own DAM needs, you should be aware of the following factors that come into play when selecting a DAM vendor.

What are your company's needs?

This is often the most difficult thing to assess. This guide will only prove useful once you are certain of your company's needs. Answer the following questions for yourself and make sure to keep them in mind when comparing DAM solutions:

1. Why exactly am I looking for a DAM solution?

Ask yourself, "Do my employees spend more time than necessary working with media files due to the fact that our current solution is badly structured?"; "Do I want to be able to securely share media with our business partners?"; "Do I want the company's media to be better organized?". If you answered "yes" to any of the above questions, A DAM solution will vastly improve your current media management situation.

2. What type of digital assets do I ordinarily work with?

A DAM solution should ideally support all of the file types you see yourself using in the foreseeable future, such as videos, documents, PDFs, video, creative files, etc.

3. Who will be using our DAM?

Do you have an idea of who will be using your DAM platform? If so, what type of solution would best solve their pain points when it comes to file management? Do they need to be able to use the DAM regardless of their geographical location, bandwidth, or external or internal access?

4. Can a DAM solution be integrated with other software my company uses?

There are many integrations, plugins and middleware that ensure that the DAM solution supports the end-to-end content lifecycle process. For example, if you need to get images from your DAM system onto your website or e-commerce site, make sure that the solution you are looking into has a plug & play integration with your web content management, e- commerce platform or that you can leverage API documentation.

5. What is my budget?

Ideally, a good DAM solution is scalable, meaning that it will be able to expand as your company grows. Additionally, make sure you consider the direct and indirect costs of a DAM solution implementation.

6. Does the chosen solution support the metadata I have?

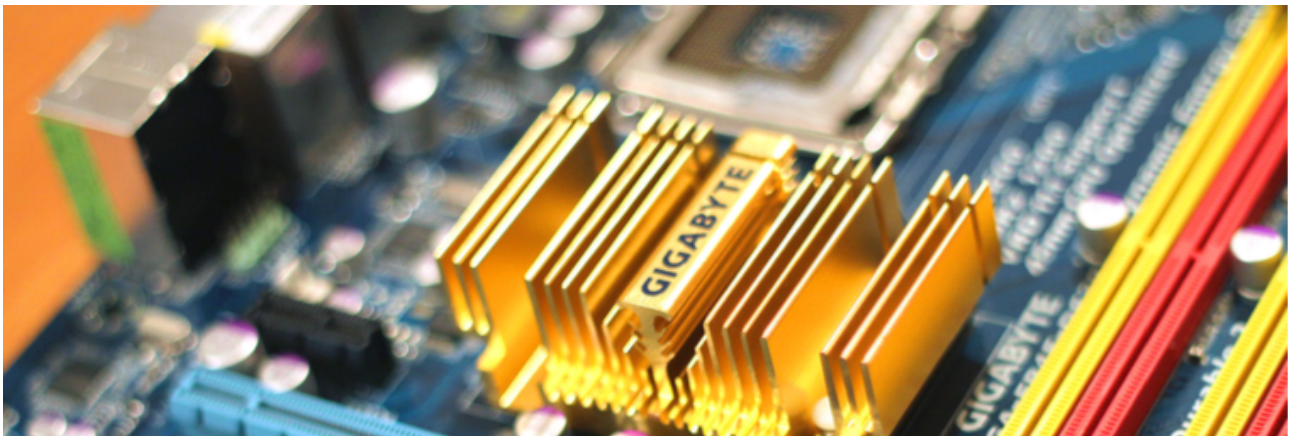
Metadata standards, such as IPTC, Exif, XMP, should be supported by your DAM solution.

Hosting and licensing

On-premise vs. cloud-based

There are two different types of DAM solutions available on the market. You can either host your own DAM solution, meaning that it will be hosted on your company's own server, on-premise. Alternatively, your DAM vendor can host the solution for you this is the"software as a service"(SaaS) model SaaS allows you to access your DAM tool via a web browser. As can be expected, both types of solutions have their pros and cons.

NOTE: Some vendors also offer "hybrid" solutions that combine on-premise functionalities with SaaS capabilities. For companies with particularly niche requirements, a hybrid solution might be the way to go.



Features	Explanation
On-premise	You host your DAM system on your own server and are responsible for the infrastructure and updates.
Cloud-Based	Your DAM system is hosted by your vendor. The software is provided as a service (SaaS).
Hybrid	Your DAM system is hosted both in the Cloud and on- premise simultaneously.

Pros of an on-premise DAM	Pros of a cloud-based DAM
Not reliant on an internet connection. If your external internet connection is unreliable or generally slower than your server connection, you should go for an on-premise DAM solution. An on-premise solution will run independently of your internet connection.	**Scalable and subscription-based**. Cloud-based DAM do not require physical implementation, meaning it is not necessary to invest a big sum upfront for things like server infrastructure. You simply pay a yearly/ monthly fee. Moreover, you can easily scale up should you need more storage space .
Total control. Your IT staff will be in complete control of the version installed, feature updates and data security. You are responsible both for backups, and protection of data from hacking attempts and other security risks. However, if security of data is more important to you than physical data security, an on-premise solution will give you peace of mind.	**No need for dedicated IT support.** If you do not have the necessary IT professionals on board to manage the on-premise DAM infrastructure and hardware, you should go for a cloud-based solution. On-premise solutions require you to buy a license for the latest version of their software, and as soon as a new version is released your software automatically becomes outdated and is no longer supported. Cloud-based DAM systems generally include automatic updates and system maintenance, as well as a team that will manage the software for you.
	External access. If you want to make your DAM system accessible to external parties (namely, people who do not have access to your servers), you should choose a cloud-based DAM. SaaS solutions are accessible via web browsers from anywhere in the world.

Search functionalities

Search functionalities are one of the key features of a DAM system, as a DAM should make your employees' lives easier by enabling them to quickly find media assets. In order to find out whether a particular DAM solution incorporates the search functionalities you require, you should ask your employees how they ordinarily search for assets. Some of the questions you might ask them are:

"Do you ever search for images based on the individual that produced them?" (If so, you should make sure the DAM you select offers the required metadata filters to search "by author")

"Do you ever search by specific phrases?" (If so, your DAM selection should offer a full text search through documents such as .pdf's and .doc's)

"Do you search by a combination of words and phrases?" (If so, look for a solution that supports Boolean search)

"Do you often search by color?" (If so, you need to look for a DAM that has a "search by color" feature)

Of course, these are just examples of some features - there are many other search functions you might need (such as a duplicate file search, a GPS-based search, search by DPI, etc.). Alongside filtering, a DAM system should also permit a basic quick search, meaning you simply type in a keyword, and all files marked by that keyword pop up.

The following lists some other features you might need in a DAM system:

Features	Explanation
Ability to add custom metadata filters	The possibility to extend your DAM system with custom filters, such as “GPS Location”which allows a more detailed filtering.
Filter by ITPC metadata fields	Filter your media by descriptive metadata, such as “Title” and “Description”.
Filter by EXIF metadata fields	Filter your media by technical metadata, such as “DPI” or “Camera Type”.
Quick-search function (a.k.s. keyword search)	A Google-like search function. Type in a keyword and get a list of search results.
Automatic duplicate finder	Your DAM system detects duplicate files in the database and suggests them for deletion or versioning.
Specific color search	Choose a color and receive images which contain that color (HTML code).
Boolean search	Ability to search using word/phrase combinations.
Recently added file search	Quickly find recently added files.
Text content search in documents	The DAM search engine not only scans through metadata, but also though document content.
Vertical (category) search	Filter your media by general characteristics (such as searching for images categorized as “beach”, “mountain”, or “people”).
Multilingual categories	Enable users to search in different languages.

Metadata handling and support

Metadata is information that describes your media assets and their content. A good search function requires metadata to narrow down your search process by finding exactly what you are looking for. Metadata can either be extracted by your DAM for reading only, or both reading and editing (and/or writing).

There are three main metadata standards:

- EXIF (embedded digital data, such as camera type and DPI)
- IPCT (descriptive data, such as title and description)
- XMP (embedding data into the file itself).

A more basic type of metadata is tagging. Tags are keywords that you can add to your media files to make them searchable (alongside such fields as “Title” and “Description”). The type of metadata support you will need depends on your DAM system’s users, and the information they require and expect to see.

Pro tip: You will also need to know what types of metadata you require in order to best to organize your media, as well as what metadata already exists, and whether you are planning to include other media formats in the future.

The following are some features of metadata and metadata importing/exporting that you might find useful:

Features	Explanation
Manual association with a file	Metadata can be added manually by the user
Automatic association of metadata with a file	Metadata is automatically extracted and associated with a specific file.
IPTC (reading/writing)	Extracts and/or edits descriptive meta- data (such as title and description).
XMP (reading/writing)	Extracts custom added metadata (such as tools used for media creation) and allows users to edit custom XMP metadata.
EXIF (reading/writing)	Extracts and permits users to edit technical metadata (such as DPI).
GPS coordinates (reading/writing)	Extracts and permits users to edit location-based GPS metadata.
Tag (reading/writing)	Extracts and permits users to edit keywords/tags from media.

Supported file types

In order to get the most out of your chosen DAM solution, you need to make sure that it supports all the files you will be working with on a regular basis, including audio, video, image, and document formats as well as the ones you see yourself working with in the future.

Make sure you also do not forget the formats you work with during the media creation process, such as InDesign (.indd) and Photoshop (.psd).

Useful features in a DAM:

- Previews of media save you time as you don't need to download a file to view it and are especially important if you are working with large files, such as videos and TIFF files. Keep in mind, however, that just because a file is supported, this does not automatically mean that the DAM solution offers a preview of it.

- Automatic file conversion is another handy tool that some DAM systems offer. Conversion means that even if you upload a file in a specific format, you can download it in another format (if you need a lower resolution of an image, for example)

- Auto-tagging with Artificial Intelligence (AI) identifies thousands of objects such as vehicles, pets, furniture or scenes within an image and generates tags, with a high accuracy level, for images uploaded, saving time when tagging assets

The following are the supported file categories and types that you might and useful:

Features	Explanation
Image file formats (supported/preview)	bmp, gif, jpg, jpeg, png, tif
Camera Raw (supported/preview)	cr2, crw, raw, k25, kdc, dcr, mrw, mef, mos, arw, pcn, pxn, nef, sr2, pef, srf, orf, dng
Audio/Video (supported/preview)	avi, mp3, swf, v, mpg, mpeg, m2v, wav, m4v, mp4, wmv, mov, wma
Microsoft Office (supported/preview)	ppt, pptx, doc, docx, xlx, xlxs
Page Layout (supported/preview)	eps, ai, indd, qxd, psd, pdf
Text (supported/preview)	txt, html, htm
Compression (supported/preview)	sit, sitx, zip, rar

Image and video manipulation

Image and video manipulation is not necessarily a must-have feature for any DAM system. If you wish to manipulate your files professionally, you should definitely use image manipulation programs such as Photoshop. However, in terms of cropping, resizing or rotating files, image manipulation can be incredibly handy as it saves you the hassle of having to download the file, edit it with the graphic software and upload it back into your DAM system.

Features	Explanation
Resizing & cropping	Change the size of your images/videos or Remove the outer parts of your images to improve framing.
Format conversion	Convert your files to another format (for example, from .doc to .pdf).
Flipping & rotating	Create mirror-reversed images or change the orientation of images and from landscape to portrait
Change color space	Adjust the color space of your pictures.
Bulk edit files	Manipulate multiple files at the same time.
Watermark	The DAM search engine not only scans through metadata, but also through document content.

Asset organization

In a good DAM solution, folders are only one aspect of a taxonomy, or media structure. As you likely know from your own experience working on a shared file server, a system where different employees and departments work with shared data often leads to duplicates. This occurs because everyone has their own preferred way of organizing files.

Most of the time, it is advisable to keep a taxonomy straightforward and not create more than two levels. Multidimensionality can be created by adding categories for general characteristics, allowing for a more vertical search. Furthermore, within multidimensionality you can add other filters such as tags and color-based search.

If you want to use your DAM solutions to share assets, a functionality to create groups of files — “collections” — will allow you to group media files from different folders and categories into a shared folder and provide them to external users.

Having files organized in a coherent and understandable manner will make for an efficient workflow.

Features	Explanation
Folder structure	Organize files into different folders and subfolders.
Add categories	Create multidimensionality by adding media file categories based on general characteristics.
Tagging / Adding keywords	Mark your media files with custom keywords to make them easily findable.
Grouped media collections	Group several files into collections independent of folders and categories.
Embeddable collections	Embed created collections.

Upload and import features

Whether you have an on-premise solution or a cloud-based one, you will be required to import all your existing digital assets onto that system. Manually adding metadata onto imported files one by one is time-consuming. Depending on the volume of your existing data, it is easiest to upload at least several files together in batches.

Because large uploads will take at least a few minutes, it is handy for you to also edit your assets in batches as you can change titles, adjust tags, and write descriptions during the time it takes for the files to upload.

If you often get sent media by external photographers or agencies whom you don't want to give permanent DAM access, you should choose a DAM system that allows uploads from external parties.

The following are some features characteristic of the upload / import process:

Features	Explanation
Single or Multiple file upload	Uploading one or several file at a time.
Extracting and editing metadata during upload	The DAM system will automatically extract available metadata during media import. You can also add or edit metadata during file import.
Uploading files via "Drag and Drop"	Select files from your computer and drag them into the relevant browser window.
Maximum file size or quantity for upload at once	Sets a limit on maximum size or quantity of files that can be uploaded at one time.
Upload additional or related files	Add additional attached files to existing ones.
Upload files without logging in	Third parties can upload files whiteout access to your DAM system.

File sharing and web publishing feature

A file-sharing functionality is useful if you and your employees spend a lot of time sending files to colleagues, partners, and clients via email. You may even want to provide files for download on your website.

As you may have already noticed, email was not designed to accommodate large file transfers. Sending attachments of over 20 MB is practically impossible, yet you would need that and more to send a high-resolution image or video. Instead, you will have to spend valuable time converting or splitting files with such applications as WinRar. Alternatives to email are file sharing via FTP, or file sharing services such as Dropbox.

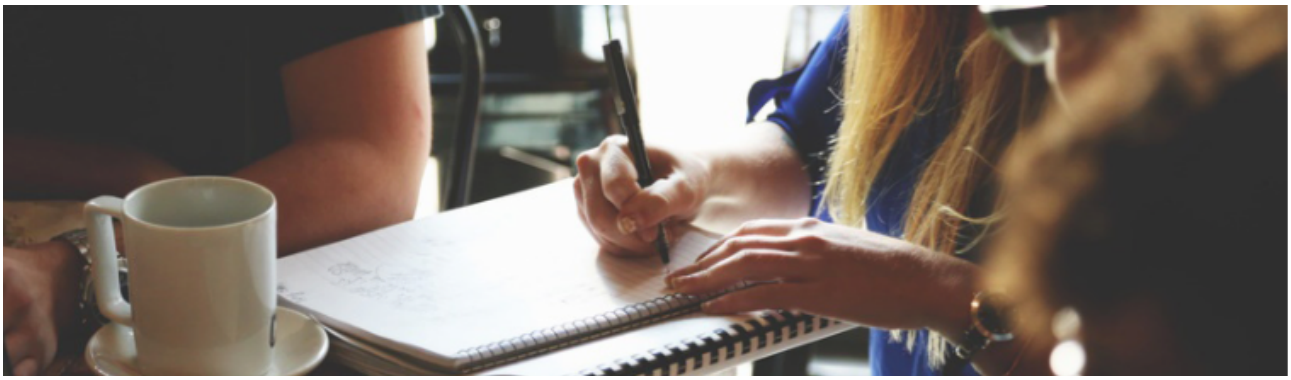
If file sharing is important to you, you need to investigate thoroughly whether your chosen DAM solution offers convenient and stress-free sharing features such as embed codes, public sharing, and secure individual sharing.

Features	Explanation
Embed codes for web- sites	The DAM system provides codes that can be copied and pasted into a content management system, so that files can be downloaded directly from the company website.
Social media sharing	Directly share media from your DAM system to social networks.
Creating and sharing file collections	Group media files and share them as media collections from the DAM or via email.
Instant download link	The DAM system provides links where media can be downloaded instantly without having to manually download from a designated download page.
Public collections with gallery view	Create media galleries which are publicly accessible via a link.

Creative approval workflows

Workflow features are necessary when multiple departments and/or agencies work together on the creation of digital assets. In practice, design concepts are often printed out and revised before being uploaded into the DAM solution in their revised form. Professional workflow management tools integrated with a DAM solution allow you to manage your digital asset creation process by predefining stages and roles.

By managing your workflows, you can be certain that everything you publish is in line with your corporate design guidelines. A time scheduling/management tool integrated within workflow management will help you regulate employee hours spent on collateral creation.



Features	Explanation
Create schedules, timelines, and tasks	Plan and keep track of your media creation workflow (tasks, deadlines, etc.).
Setup predefined creative approval flows	Create templates for often-followed workflows.
Assign roles and provide feedback	Share work and define roles for specific users and add comments or annotations
Integration with page layout programs	Directly export media into your layout software.
Video playback	Provide commentary and feedback on videos.
Personal task overview	Have an instantaneous overview of all your tasks.

Brand guidelines feature

Every product is part of a brand, even if the company that produces it is a small or medium-sized business. Regardless of size, every company wants its customers to recognize and associate positively with its brand as a form of protection against competitors.

There are many ways to create a strong and memorable brand, wherein consistency is key. If you work with external partners such as agencies, it is difficult to make sure everybody is using the visual identity of your brand correctly. Brand portal features help you provide up-to-date information and guidelines regarding communication matters.

Features	Explanation
Visual/brand guidelines	Define and illustrate guidelines that describe to your employees and partners the exact ways they should communicate your brand.
Mobile app development	Make your solution is portable. Empower your employees to use your digital assets on the go.
Brand templates	Create templates for often-used media items such as business cards and posters. Users can change texts and edit/insert pictures without having to use professional page layout software.
Brand store	Share your advertising materials with your global team through a brand store integrated with the product information in your DAM.
Product information management	Sync your product information with the media in your DAM.

User access control

Managing user access is important when many people and departments in your company work on projects together within the DAM system, and especially so if your company o en works with external parties. As an admin user, you will likely want to be able to control which person can access and see certain assets. Being able to define roles and access levels for groups of users is key to any well-organized DAM system.

Features	Explanation
Secure login	Each user of the DAM system has their own pass-word-protected account.
Defined user profiles	Ability to create custom user profiles by defining the system rights (including edit, upload, and download permissions) of individual users or user groups.
Access control	Control which users can access what parts of your DAM system taxonomy.
Single sign-on	Sign into Bynder using your existing corporate credentials.
Google sign in	Sign into Bynder using your existing Google credentials

Other features

There are many other features that can be offered by DAM solutions. For example, if your business is international, you might want your DAM system to support multiple languages and allow switching between languages.

If you want your DAM to reflect the visual branding identity of your business, you should pay close attention to a vendor's custom theming capabilities.

The following are some examples of features that might come in handy:

Features	Explanation
Multiple language support	The DAM system supports different languages, and allows users to switch between languages.
Open image bank with online payment features	The DAM system has a shopping cart and payment modules like those found in web shops.
API	An interface which allows users to integrate media stored in the DAM system directly into other systems.
Mobile accessibility	The DAM system is accessible from mobile devices.
A desktop integration option	Your DAM users might find it useful to access the DAM system directly from their desktop.
Brand adaptable look and feel	The style of the DAM system can be completely adapted to your brand's visual identity
Account/media usage statistics	Statistics about activities in your DAM system
CMS plugins	Directly import media files from your DAM system into your content management system (CMS)
Brand store	Share your advertising materials with your global team through a brand store integrated with the product information in your DAM.
Product information management	Sync your product information with the media in your DAM.

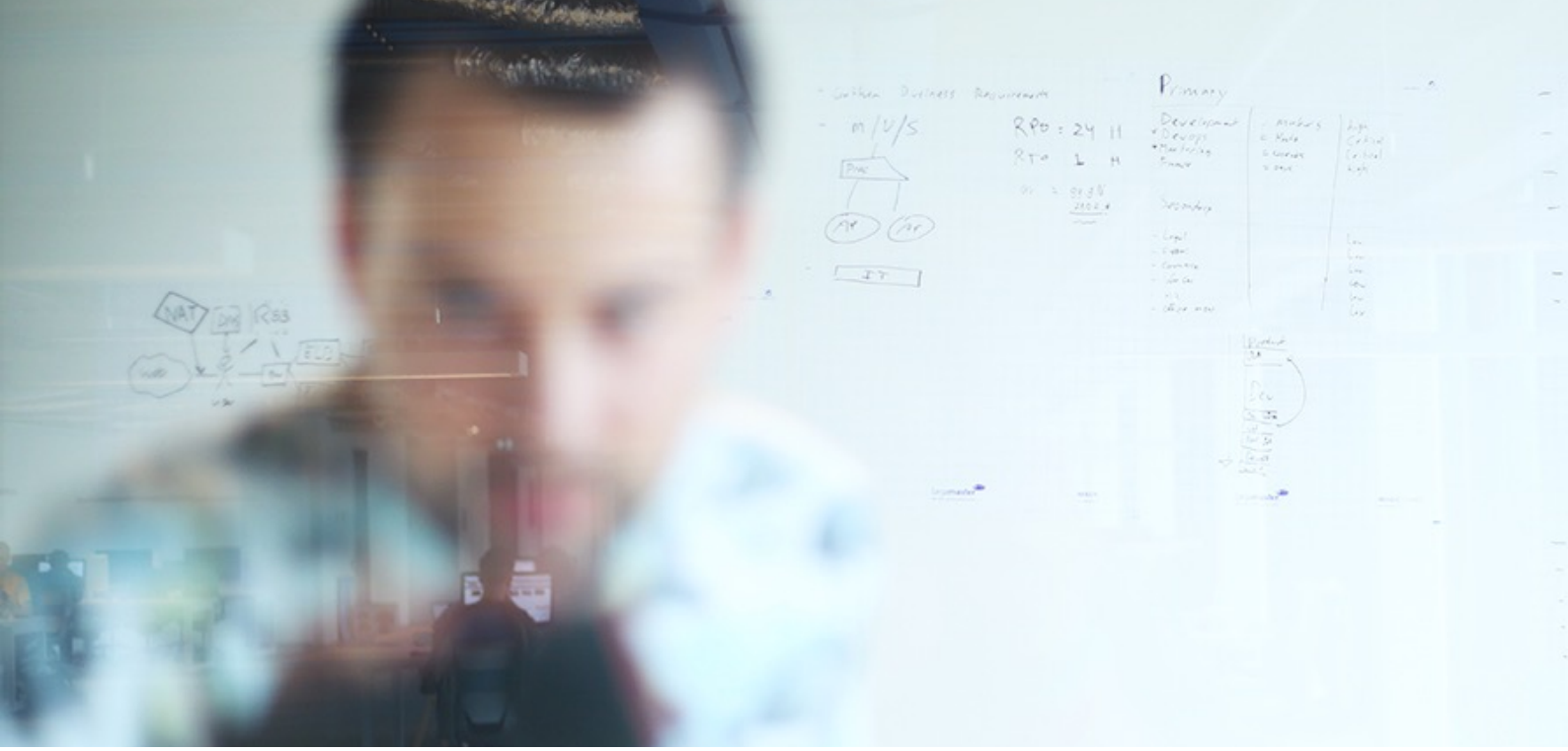
Pricing

A professional DAM solution will not come free of charge. Costs vary vendor to vendor, and heavily depend on whether you want to host your DAM solution yourself, or license a SaaS.

Don't forget to take into account the hidden costs of on-premise solutions, such as hard and software costs (dedicated servers, back-ups, etc), ongoing maintenance fees, one-off installation fees, IT hand-over costs, project management costs, updates, security testing, etc.

If you wish to remain more flexible, you should go for a Cloud-based solution, where all updating and support is usually included and there are no physical set-up costs. Moreover, a SaaS solution is scalable, meaning storage capacities are quickly and easily extendable.

Want to find out more about pricing? Request pricing for Bynder here.



Some facts

About Bynder

Bynder is the fastest way to professionally manage digital files. Its award-winning digital asset management (DAM) platform offers marketers a smart way to find and share creative files such as graphics, videos and documents.

Thousands of brand managers, marketers and creatives from global organizations like PUMA, innocent drinks and KLM Royal Dutch Airlines use Bynder to organize company files; edit and approve projects in real time; auto-format and resize files; and make the right content available to others at the click of a button.

Founded in 2013 by CEO Chris Hall, Bynder has nine global offices located in The Netherlands, USA, Spain, UK and UAE. For more information, visit www.bynder.com or follow Bynder on Twitter @Bynder.